



Fortunate Families Newsletter

Number 15

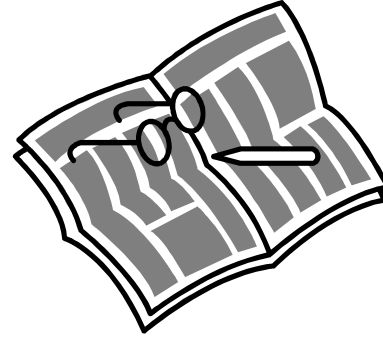
December 2005

Catholic Families Advocating Respect and Justice for their Gay & Lesbian Children

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Words to ponder

There are many wonderful and excellent priests in the Church who have a gay orientation, are chaste and celibate, and are very effective ministers of the Gospel. Witch hunts and gay bashing have no place in the Church.

-- Spokane Bishop William Skylstad, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Oct. 20, 2005 edition of the diocesan newspaper, Inland Register



We should be more attentive to whom our seminarians may be inclined to hate than whom they love. Racism, misogyny and homophobia would all be signs that someone could not be a good model of Christ.

-- Timothy Radcliffe, OP, former Master of the Dominicans, The Tablet Nov. 26, 2005

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The "Instruction"

By Casey Lopata

Nov. 29, 2005 the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education issued its long-awaited "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual tendencies in View of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders." The Fortunate Families November newsletter encouraged you to read the Instruction upon its release, as well as articles in that issue by Bishop Matthew Clark, by Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, and about Father Fred Daley. A summary of your responses in this issue.

Upon its release, we sent our email readers a link to the *Instruction* and a statement from Bishop William Skylstad, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. [<http://www.usccb.org/instruction.shtml>]. We also provided links to responses from two gay priests [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/4481984.stm> AND <http://www.alternet.org/story/28816/>]. We encouraged readers to express their views to Pope Benedict XVI, Bishop Skylstad, and their local bishop – with a copy to us. Nov. 30, we also emailed the statement from the National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian and Gay Ministries [<http://www.nacdlgm.org/pr112905.pdf>].

Excerpts from your responses follow this introduction. Considering these and other responses, virtually all critical, I then offer my thoughts about whether there is any good news here.



Your comments on the "Instruction"

From a gay man:

These policies will do so much more harm by sending priests farther into a closet. I have known many gay priests that I respected and admired for their works, I can't imagine what they are feeling today. The Catholic Church is sending a clear message that they are only going to market to a certain select group of people.

From a lesbian:

There needs to be some type of collective action that will make clear the issues this creates for current and future priests called to ministry, staffing of positions that can "only be held by priests," and the message that it sends to all LGBT people. My gut reaction is not to baptize us if we don't have full access to the sacraments by virtue of our sexual orientation. If we aren't gifted with celibacy, we cannot marry; if we are, we cannot use it for the priesthood. Someone has judged our creation to be inherently disordered, unworthy, and a danger to the church. Yet the scriptures tell us, "fear is useless, what is needed is trust."



Seems to me the hierarchy hasn't done very good discriminating between what is to be feared and what is to be trusted.

From a gay man:

It's absolutely atrocious! It's one of the most un-Christian things I've ever seen come out of the

Church! Apparently I am in a "situation that seriously obstructs" my ability to "properly [relate] to men and women." Honestly! That's an incredible insult! But then again, I have to consider the source -- a group of self-righteous curmudgeons who don't have a clue how to relate to men and women!

From parents of lesbian daughters:



Once again the Vatican has shot themselves in the foot. That they want to disqualify as a candidate any person whose homosexuality is "deep seated" is the tip-off they don't have a clue!!!

From a gay priest:

I have heard and have put up with all the "crap" that both church and society have said about us over the years, but this document makes me more than angry, even though I knew it was coming. The one statement I cannot seem to handle well is this: "Such people, in fact, find themselves in a situation that seriously obstructs them from properly relating to men and women." That speaks to me of a presumption of an underlying pathology that makes us already dysfunctional when it comes to relating to any man OR woman. Of course, straight men are the model for relating to men and women, right? Take a look at their record!

I have worked hard, and many of us have, to get to where we are today, and I cannot let anyone, let alone a church, take my self-esteem and self-worth away while presuming to deal with us having an underlying pathology. There is only a small step from discussing seminarians in this light and those already ordained! What about

deep-seated tendencies?

According to my reading and study, orientation is a basic part of the personality, probably established by the age of five. If that is the case, doesn't everyone have a "deep-seated tendency" whether gay or straight toward their own perspective? And what is "transitory problem?" I cannot even imagine what they mean by that? But the real issue here, is scapegoating. We now join a new set of victims, scapegoated by Rome and the bishops concerning the abuse crisis. The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) said it best: "Gay priests have now officially joined a long and ever-growing list of bishops' scapegoats for this crisis, including unforgiving victims, salacious journalists, greedy lawyers, ambitious prosecutors and others. Instead of blame shifting and finger pointing, church officials should look in the mirror if they want to understand the root of this scandal."

Right now, I'm feeling proud of being a priest for the Lord and for the gospel, but ashamed of being connected to the Roman Catholic Church. I am embarrassed trying to represent an institution that has dismissed who I am. Thank God for my belief in the Lord and His Good News, as well as the understanding and support of my bishop. Without that, I'm not sure I'd stay!

This Advent season is a time of waiting....waiting for good news, waiting for the Son to rise in the darkness of our sinfulness. May God send the Light to shine once again on the church that wanders in the darkness, missing even the flicker of light that appears on the horizon. May the strength and concern for one another grow in the days ahead so we might be

renewed once again in the sunlight of God's love. May this moment of feeling "slapped in the face," help us to be aware of other's suffering and enable us to reach out with our woundedness.

From a mother of a gay son:



Dear Holy Father: I pray that the Church comes to realize that God made gay people with their own particular sexuality. Know that God loves them just as He made them and hopefully someday we will better understand what it truly means to be homosexual. Until then, I am thankful for God's gift of 4 beautiful children, one gay and the rest straight. In return, my task has been to love and teach them well. I try not to question His blessings or wisdom and expect our children to lead respectful, responsible lives in accordance to their sexual orientation. I expect our children to use what God has given them and to live their lives as best they can. I pray that the Vatican's newest document is seen as a call to ALL priests/seminarians for a better understanding of their sexuality and that it does not promote any physical or psychological damage to a group of people who for no fault of their own are homosexual. The gay individual has enough problems dealing with misunderstanding and alienation. Our family's experience has been positive in loving and accepting our son. We are blessed. With all due respect, I pray that the Holy Spirit guides the Church to a clearer understanding of what it means to be a sexual being. We have a better grasp of science and psychology than ever before and the questions of our sexuality are not out of the reach of

understanding and appreciation. Hopefully we can come to see that homosexuality is a natural extension of God's creation. The Church needs to look at the gay person and give more spiritual guidance than just saying no. Thank you for listening. I pray for your understanding. Do not be afraid.

From a family life minister:

A sad day indeed!!! Especially the part about gay people not being able to relate in a healthy way to others????!!! Where do they get their ideas????? Certainly not from talking to gay people!!!! It reminds me of the church here in LA which for years would not admit the Indian- the native people to the priesthood. Only Spanish blood was good enough for Jesus????!!!! And the racist issue. Blacks are to be loved but they must sit in the back of the bus!!!! I hope gay groups will go after the institution because it really has gone too far now. It needs to be put in its place as dangerous to homosexual people. Let's keep up the good fight in the name of Jesus who would NEVER recognize himself in such a document which comes from his chair!!! It is much closer to all he condemned in the righteousness of the priests and Pharisees of his day. I hope that God is using all this to bring the institution to its knees so that it can be transformed by His Love!!!


WWJD?

From a mother of a gay son:

I keep thinking, "What would Jesus do?" God sure isn't making a mistake when he creates people who are gay.

From a father of a gay son:

It is not clear what the negative consequences are of ordaining gays. In the carrying out of his

priestly duties, what is it gays will do that will cause harm to the church? I know of many priests who are known to be gay, and many, many others who I believe to be gay. Are you going to fire them? Some of the presiding bishops are still planning to ordain gay men – are you going to fire these bishops? Church leaders  should stop using the term objectively disordered—that sounds like a mental illness label—suggesting that gays are unable to function. I know many gays who lead exemplary lives. How do you determine that a gay man studying to be a priest is mature and a straight man similarly studying is not? An undercurrent in your document is that gays are the cause of pedophilic acts. How did you come to such conclusions? The evidence is missing!

From a lesbian:

Let's not get 'sucked in' and have our energies diverted. The real issue is what do the issuers of the 'document' understand about all of human sexuality, and how does it square with 'heterosexual candidates' to the priesthood... the church needs to explore its understanding of all of human sexuality and the context of relationships. American Catholics don't believe much (anything) said 'officially' by 'the church' about sex, so let's not waste energy on a long-won (30 years ago) battle. Let's look at the future, and the future is supporting lesbian and gay Catholics, their children, and their parents, and siblings...it's about establishing our families!

From a father of lesbian daughters:

An instruction would have been welcomed that dealt with sexual maturity among all candidates, heterosexual and

homosexual. Especially if this instruction drew upon the best in the social sciences and theology. Unfortunately, the latest instruction does not. The authors seem not to be familiar with the best in the social sciences or chose to ignore its findings. What we have been given is a too brief and vague document that leaves many questions unanswered. Perhaps we should be grateful for this. Unfortunately, the document focuses on candidates who are homosexual. Most likely because the authors still insist on linking pedophilia with homosexuality despite the advice of a panel of experts the Vatican itself convened. This document has the potential to cause great confusion at best and great harm at worst.

At this year's meeting of the U.S. Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the President, Bishop Skylstad, asked for a round of applause for all the priests in our country who are serving the church so well in these difficult times. The Bishops responded with a long, standing ovation. He did not say: "Let's applaud for all except our priests who are homosexual." He asked the Bishops to express their support and love for all our priests as Christ would have done. Thank you, Bishops, for the love and gratitude you have shown.



To my many priest friends who are gay and celibate, I also applaud you in these difficult times. And I remind you what the U.S. Bishops said in *Always Our Children* (1997), addressed to parents of homosexual children and to homosexual themselves: "Though at times you may feel discouraged, hurt, or angry, do not walk away ...from the Christian community, from all those who love you. In you God's love is revealed."

From a parent of an LGBT person:

Dear Pope Benedict, It is with great sadness that I write. Christ said we are to love one another as He loves us. Your recent edict banning gay men from the seminary is contradictory to everything Christ stands for. The only reason I can still practice my faith in good conscience is that I recognize this ruling is a man-made edict and does not come from God. You are banning God's children from ministering to God's people because of your misunderstanding of the causes behind pedophilia. During Advent we should be welcoming all and working towards peace on earth, good will to all. How sad that your fears have led you to fracture even further the Catholic Church. I pray not only for you but especially for all the people wounded and cut off from the Church by your lack of insight and knowledge.

From a mother of a lesbian daughter:

I would like you to know how much it hurts to hear the child you raised and love referred to once again as "objectively disordered" by the Church. I cannot imagine the pain and despair it causes all the chaste, gay priests who have served the Church so steadfastly and who continue to do so. The document states that it was "made more urgent by the current situation" to ban those with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" from entering into Holy Orders. The only reasonable conclusion from this wording would be that homosexual persons were solely responsible for the recent "scandal" within our Beloved Church. Not only is this not true, it is spiritually harmful to those of us who know and love homosexual



people. And it is an affront to all the girls and women who were abused.

As the parent of a lesbian, I know my child to be a kind, loving, devout person who lives her life in full accordance with the Gospel of Jesus as do many homosexual persons. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states "they do not choose their homosexuality" [*Editor's note: this was dropped in the "definitive" edition of The Catechism*] and as a parent, I can attest to that very statement. My daughter, who received 16 years of Catholic education, struggled and prayed for many years asking God to take this challenge away. When we learned of our daughter's orientation, we were devastated. We, too, prayed endlessly for God to change things. We said Novenas, Rosaries, and stormed all the saints in Heaven to help us. God answered our prayers and did change things – but in a way we did not expect. During our time of praying, reading, and getting to know gay and lesbian persons, we became aware that they are indeed a gift from God--a gift that reflects His love in a new and powerful way. I now have a small insight into the agony Our Blessed Mother suffered when her Son was condemned and then crucified. Part of her anguish must have come from those in the early Church who abandoned Jesus and did not speak up or help Him. I am often asked why I stay in the Roman Catholic Church where my child is not welcomed and women are not valued in so many ways. My answer is that I stay for the Eucharist.



This document will only make it harder for the faithful to celebrate and receive the Eucharist. For the present, I remain.....



Musings!

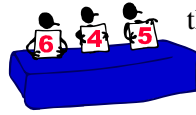
By Father Lee Chase

Reprinted with permission from the December 4, 2005 Saint Thomas More Bulletin, Rochester, NY

Two weeks ago, I received in the mail an unmarked envelope – no return address. Although it is my usual practice to ignore such letters, they usually end up being no good, I opened the letter. Much to my expectation, it was an anonymous note attached to newspaper clippings – one of Bishop Clark’s Along the Way column in the Catholic Courier regarding homosexual priests [Editor’s note: this was in our November newsletter] and another of articles from the Democrat and Chronicle responding to that article. The unsigned note to me was nasty. This coward who refused to say who he/she was, hiding behind anonymity, asked whether I would respond to the Bishop (the implication was that my response would be counter to his) or would I remain silent (the anonymous author telling me that this is my usual response).

Well, I will not remain silent. I have the courage and the conviction, the trust in my knowledge and relationship with my parish to voice my thoughts. And I will not, in any way, break my promise of obedience and respect to my bishop. He is our chief shepherd, the pastor of our local Church of Rochester. Matthew is a very intelligent, prayerful, and trusted man. I applaud him for his pastoral sensitivity on an issue that is explosive, misunderstood, and a vehicle for hatred.

Yes, hatred. What the Vatican’s recent instruction has taught is nothing new. All candidates for the priesthood are examined and screened prior to their entrance into the seminary. All candidates are called to prepare for a life of celibacy and chastity.



And all candidates who find themselves in their position of life where they cannot embrace this chosen discipline are not suitable candidates for the priesthood. Maybe because the media and the political situation in this world has focused so much on this one particular minority group – often making the homosexual person the scapegoat for such problems as the rampant divorce rate in this country, the natural disasters that have afflicted our world, or the sexual abuse of children – our Church has decided to reiterate its traditional instruction to bishops and rectors of seminaries. Our bishop has made it clear that he “will further study the document and apply its wisdom in the Diocese of Rochester.”

Yet, in the world in which I minister, I am encountering hatred and vilification. Some among us would expel, excommunicate, and even cause harm to our sisters and brothers who are gay or lesbian. When were we ever taught as Christians to hate another? Where, in our Catechism, do we learn to verbally abuse others and dehumanize them by derogatory words and phrases? I can find nothing but shame in the idea that one of our parishioners would harbor such hatred toward another.



Our call, our constant call, is to be a community of the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom is a Kingdom of

love, justice, compassion, equality, and forgiveness. This is the preaching of Jesus, it is the Gospel to which I responded in my vocation, and the One I will continue to preach as long as I am able. As we prepare to celebrate His birth once again, let us remind ourselves that he came to save us!



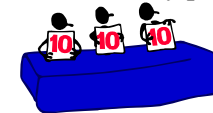
Is there ANY Good News!?

By Casey Lopata

The “Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders” provoked much criticism – from our readers and many others. Given that, I looked hard to see if there was ANY good news in it. Ironically, it seems there might be. Consider the following.

1. It does not absolutely ban all homosexually-oriented candidates.

Given the early rumors of an absolute ban, that’s good news. It says the Church “cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture,’” but it doesn’t define those terms, makes an exception if the homosexual tendencies are “only the expression of a transitory problem,” and, it



leaves this judgment to the bishop or major superior. Perhaps this flexibility shows that they don’t really believe all they’re saying.

2. It identifies formation requirements for ALL priestly candidates.

These include the “four dimensions of formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral,” highlighting “the particular importance of human formation, as the necessary foundation of all formation.” It says all candidates “must reach affective maturity,” and that, “such maturity will allow him to relate correctly to both men and women.” The *good news* here is that these requirements are the basis for a fruitful discussion of who should be ordained, regardless of sexual orientation – or, for that matter, gender. Perhaps the Vatican will finally take part in this discussion that’s happening despite them. Bishops are! -- Fort Wayne-South Bend Bishop John D’Arcy publicly said Bishop Skylstad (see Words to Ponder, p.1) is “simply wrong.”

3. It says this is “made more urgent by the current situation,” but doesn’t define what that means.

Most critiques presume this refers to the clergy sexual abuse issue, though church officials say work started on it well before the sexual abuse crisis headlines in 2002. The *good news* here is that leaving “current situation” undefined invites discussion – e.g., of evidence that shows homosexual people are no more likely than heterosexual people to molest children, and the counsel of experts at a Vatican panel who said homosexuality does not cause abuse any more than being newly ordained.



4. The terms used are vague and undefined.

What is a “transitory problem”? What are “profoundly deep-seated homosexual tendencies”? What is the “so-called ‘gay culture.’”? It’s not clear how these words and phrases relate to orientation, a term not used. The *good news* here is two-fold. 1) it permits discretion, enough for enlightened bishops and seminary rectors to screen candidates as they have in the past. 2) it invites an opportunity to hear of the lived experience of people with such “tendencies.” Openly gay Fr. Fred Daley’s story (see Nov. 2005 Fortunate Families newsletter) is a good example.

5. It calls for honesty about sexual “tendencies.”

It says: “It would be gravely dishonest for a candidate to hide his own homosexuality in order to proceed, despite everything, towards ordination. Such a deceitful attitude does not correspond to the spirit of truth, loyalty and openness that must characterize the personality of him who believes he is called to serve Christ and his Church in the ministerial priesthood.”

Encouraging honesty is *good news*. But it raises a question: Is grave dishonesty acceptable after ordination for those who so fear discovery of their own “tendencies” that they hide behind homophobic words and deeds? Honesty with their spiritual directors would be *good news* too.

6. It says nothing about current gay priests.

It says: “the Church ... may not admit to the seminary or holy orders those who ... present deep-seated homosexual tendencies.” The *good news* here is, if they truly believe this, why do they permit those currently ordained (at least

those that are ‘out’) to continue to function as priests or bishops? It could also mean current gay priests are okay – they’re role models. Therefore, gay candidates for the seminary with similar backgrounds and experiences are acceptable candidates – also *good news*.

7. It was issued without the personal approval of the Pope.

This is a mid-level administrative document. The Instruction was approved for issue by the Pope, but not *forma specifica*. The *good news* here is that it is not invested with the personal authority of the Pope and therefore more changeable.



8. It is based on assumptions not supported by the human sciences.

The notable omission of the word “orientation,” and the failure to use scientific language in highlighting the “case” of “homosexual tendencies” as a “transitory problem,” supports the contention of theologian James Alison: that the Vatican does not accept the scientific conclusion that some people naturally have a homosexual orientation. In the Vatican’s view, he says, they are perverted heterosexuals. The *good news* here is that the entire Instruction stands or falls on this unsubstantiated assumption.

Alison says, the question to ask, respectfully, is: “I hear what you are saying, but is it true?” Telling our stories, as faithful priests, or parents, or allies, or LGBT people, we can help more and more people in the Church come to a truthful answer. The Vatican will eventually follow the lead of the People of God.

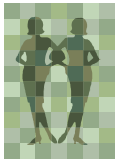




Prayer service

By Casey Lopata

Dec. 15, at St. Mary's Church in Rochester, NY, over 50 people prayed in thanksgiving for the faithful, loving ministry of gay priests and in recognition of the heroic struggle of gay and lesbian Catholics as they continue to journey with us. Responding to readings from Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Chris Glaser, and an unnamed gay priest, people shared their empathy, frustration, hope, and commitment. Another 116 people, unable to attend, joined in spirit by adding their names and their comments on our web site. Pictures are on our web site.



My twin lesbian daughters

By Florence Balog

On October 22, 2005, I spoke as part of a panel at the Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good. The title of the conference was "Who does Jesus invite to His Church?" The presentation was very emotional, both for me and for the 300 persons there. I felt very much the presence of the Spirit both guiding me and letting my words be received. I was surprised by the entire assembly giving me a standing ovation. Many were visibly moved; many came up and spoke with me. I am not the one to get up before a crowd and speak; so it had to be the Spirit working through this potter's clay.

I am a member of St. Andrew Parish. My husband, Steve, and

I are parents of 35-yr.old twin lesbian daughters.

Our twin daughters came out to us after their first year of college 15 years ago (1990). The revelation of their sexual orientation didn't change our love for them.

We were the ones who changed. We were confused and fearful of our daughters' revelation. Both society and the church, as we understood them, condemned homosexuality. For 5 years we were silent; we kept the secret to ourselves. When neighbors, friends, relatives, St. Andrew parishioners asked us, "How are your daughters? Are they married yet?" I would always answer something like, "Well, you know, they're out there doing their thing." I began to notice that every time I said that, I felt a "tug" in the center of my being. I began to realize I wasn't being truthful with myself. The feeling kept churning in me until I began to see what it was all about. I realized that I could not acknowledge my own daughters' sexual orientation for fear of what others would say.

With that realization, I zeroed in on my church, my faith community, the institution that influenced me from the day I was born and also baptized. I realized that neither my husband nor I had ever heard the words, "homosexual", "gay" or "lesbian" used in church; certainly, we'd never heard that gay and lesbian people were welcome to come to the table. The only message we received was silent condemnation.

The dilemma set in. How dare my church judge my daughters simply because of their sexual orientation! I know my daughters intimately. I know their spiritual and moral goodness and integrity. I know

them as compassionate, wholesome and loving women. It became evident to me that my church with its violent rhetoric against GLBT people didn't really know her GLBT children.

As the mother of twin lesbian daughters, I believe:

- my daughters are made in the image and likeness of God;
- homosexuality is not a choice but a variation on the God-given gift of sexuality;
- homosexuality expresses another dimension of the diversity of the life of God, and is therefore good!

I challenge the misconceptions and inaccuracies concerning GLBT people, including that homosexuality:

- is a curable condition,
- a changeable lifestyle, or
- equivalent to pedophilia.

I do not accept as truth the notion that same-sex marriage is part of "an ideology of evil"; or that gay unions threaten children with abuse and will destroy marriage, as the Vatican has stated.

So, when I hear messages from the Congregation of the Faith that my daughters' homosexual orientation is "objectively disordered" and because of this orientation, they are "intrinsically inclined toward evil," I become very angry. This group of men does not know my daughters! These are two human beings who are suffering, physical, mental and emotional abuse, and we along with them, are being treated as if they do not belong to the Body of Christ. They belong with us in our Church; they were baptized there; they need to be able to come home. Both of my daughters find the church hypocritical. One of them put it this way: "Mom, I didn't choose to be lesbian. I already am a

minority bi-racial black person, and a woman. I don't need another thing to separate me from society, to make others hate me more. But, this is who I am. I feel the church is trying to make me be against myself."

The oppression of GLBT persons is a justice issue; one of trying to form right relationships; of listening to our stories; of getting to know us and the gifts we bring. Simply stated, it's one of living Jesus' message of including everyone at the table. I am happy to say, St. Andrew Community does just that!



Parents and allies reflecting God's love

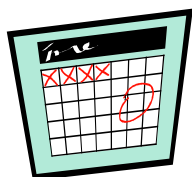
Menominee Falls, WI

Gay and Straight in Christ is a Christian faith-sharing group seeking to welcome and support people when homosexuality is a part of their life or the life of their family and/or friends. They meet in the Chapel at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, N88 W17658 Christman Road, Menomonee Falls, WI on the second Sunday of each month at 7:00 PM. Info: Ann Castiglione at 262-255-2035.

Seattle, WA

Catholic Parents Support Group, St. Benedict's Parish Center on the corner of 49th and Wallingford in Seattle WA, offers a safe, confidential and supportive environment within our Catholic heritage for families, friends and any concerned persons. This invitation is especially extended to teachers, counselors and all educators who may encounter

GLBT issues in their student or parent populations. On January 23rd, members will travel to Olympia to show support for GLBT equality at the Capitol for Equality Day, 2006. Info; Janie Stevens, Co-Facilitator. Home - 425-486-7579. Work - 425-739-9997. cpsgseattle@gmail.com



Fortunate Families Calendar

Jan. 19 (Thurs), 2005

Catholic Gay & Lesbian Family Ministry sponsors the *Catholic Parents Rainbow Network* which usually meets the 3rd Thursday of each month from 7 to 9 PM at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Henrietta, NY. Join other parents for prayers, sharing, discussion, and refreshments. We hope to see you Thursday, Jan. 19 for a discussion of the human sciences and homosexuality with Dr. James Stewart. Future meetings are: Mar. 16, Apr. 20, May 18, Jun. 15. (No Feb. meeting). Info: 671-6796 or 244-4427, or email cprnet@aol.com or maob@rochester.rr.com.

Feb. 11 (Sat), 2006

A Day of Reflection for Catholic parents of gay sons and lesbian daughters will be held on Sat., Feb. 11, 2006 from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm, at the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse, 150 French Rd., Pittsford, NY. Cost: \$25 per person, \$40 per couple. Sponsored by Catholic Gay and Lesbian Family Ministry. For more info and to register: 585-671-6796 or maob@rochester.rr.com, or download form from the Fortunate Families web site.

Jun. 24, 2006

Day of Reflection for Parents of Lesbian Daughters and Gay Sons. Manresa Retreat Centre, Toronto, Canada. Info: jmontague@sympatico.ca

Sept. 21-24, 2006

National Association of Catholic Diocesan Lesbian & Gay Ministries Conference. Brooklyn, NY. Info: office@nacdlgm.org.

Thanks!!!

Thank you for your prayers and support—particularly the 38 people/groups that contributed since our November newsletter! We are especially pleased that three of these contributions were for the Len Szumiloski Memorial Fund which provides funds for pastoral ministers who may not be able to afford Fortunate Families resource manuals: Seeds of Hope and More Seeds, and to purchase resources, books, CDs, videos and DVDs for use in Fortunate Families ministry.

Fortunate Families, Inc. is a non-profit corporation. Our 501(c)(3) application has been filed. Your donations help with efforts like this newsletter (1st class postage will soon be 39¢) and with resources for ministers, parents and other family members.

You can contribute by check or by going to this link: http://www.fortunatefamilies.com/make_a_contribution.htm

Your prayers and support strengthen our commitment to help families with gay, lesbian, and bisexual and transgender members to know they are indeed fortunate families!